

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CPB 05/19

Employment of people with convictions in Statutory Agencies - Highland

Report by Group Manager Niall MacLennan, Chair of the Community Justice Partnership

Summary

This report provides an update and overview to the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board of the work being carried out around the employment and employability priority within the Community Justice Plan for 2018-2021. The paper also proposes actions which the statutory agencies within Highland may wish to consider in relation to the employment of people with convictions, including a suggestion for a new breakthrough achievement.

1. Background

- 1.1 It is a well-known fact that employment is a key factor in the prevention of reoffending - What Works to Reduce Reoffending: A Summary of the Evidence produced by the Scottish Government in 2015 –

‘Finding suitable employment and having improved emotional well-being can also be important for desistance’^[52]

^[52] McNeil, F. and Whyte, B. (2007) Reducing Reoffending: Social Work and Community Justice in Scotland. Willan Publishing.

2. Employment /Employability Priority - Community Justice Plan 2018-21

- 2.1 The Community Justice Plan 2018 - 21 has 3 outcomes, one of which is employment and employability. The partnership is working on various actions around this which they are hoping to implement prior to the cessation of the plan.
- 2.2 The Community Justice Partnership are holding an employment event on 7 November 2019 in Inverness. The event is primarily for businesses across Highland with the aim of changing perceptions around the employment of people with convictions.
- 2.3 As part of this strand of work, the partnership are considering what policies are in place (if any) for the employment of those with convictions in each of the statutory agencies involved in community justice. As a consequence, those agencies within the partnership were requested to complete a short survey via survey monkey with a view to gaining information in this regard. Although a couple of agencies didn't respond, of the responses gained 70% had a policy in place which prevented someone with an offending history from being employed with them.
- 2.4 The partnership are of the opinion that through this approach it would lend to their credibility if they can demonstrate that they have in fact looked at the policies and processes around the employment of those with convictions in an effort to address some of the issues this raises within their own agencies.

2.5 Out of the eight statutory organisations involved in community justice, responses have been received from Scottish Prisons Service, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Highland Council, NHS Highland, Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. A response has also been received from the Department of Work and Pensions and the Children's Reporter who are non-statutory. It appears that most of the organisations who answered have a policy in place which directly rules out the employment of people with previous convictions.

2.6 It is not clear, however, what percentage of the workforce within the organisations who are able to accept those with convictions includes someone with an offending history; or if there is any positive discrimination to support the employment of people who have offended.

3. Next Steps

3.1 The Community Justice Partnership are looking for support in consideration of how we can better support the employment of those who have offended in an effort to reduce reoffending. Notwithstanding the fact that for some agencies to directly employ this would be problematic.

The CPP Board are asked to consider the following as a commitment to the development of employability options for those with an offending history within Highland and as a breakthrough commitment from the members of the CPP:

1. As a collective of large employers in the area and where appropriate, a commitment to review individual organisational policy in relation to the employment of people with an offending history. This is to specifically consider what might be possible to change in an effort to facilitate an increase in the employment of those with an offending history.
 - a. Consideration may be given to attempting to record the total percentage of work force with an offending history across CPP agencies?
2. To establish a short-term single-issue working group specifically to consider planning and delivery of an improvement plan for the employability for those with an offending history. The plan should be presented to the CPP Board for approval at the autumn meeting with a delivery time frame of not more than 12 months.
3. Strong support, through attendance and promotion, at the employability event on the 7th of November.

Recommendation

Members of the Board are asked to consider the outline of the proposal contained in this paper.

Designation: Group Manager Niall MacLennan, SFRS

Date: 29 May 2019

Author: Margaret McShane, Community Justice Partnership Manager/Mhairi Wylie, HTSI



The Highland Community Justice Partnership Plan 2018 - 2021

The Highland Community Justice Partnership is delegated responsibility by the Highland Community Planning Partnership to develop and deliver the Highland Community Justice Plan and to deliver better outcomes for the communities of Highland by reducing offending and reoffending behaviour.

